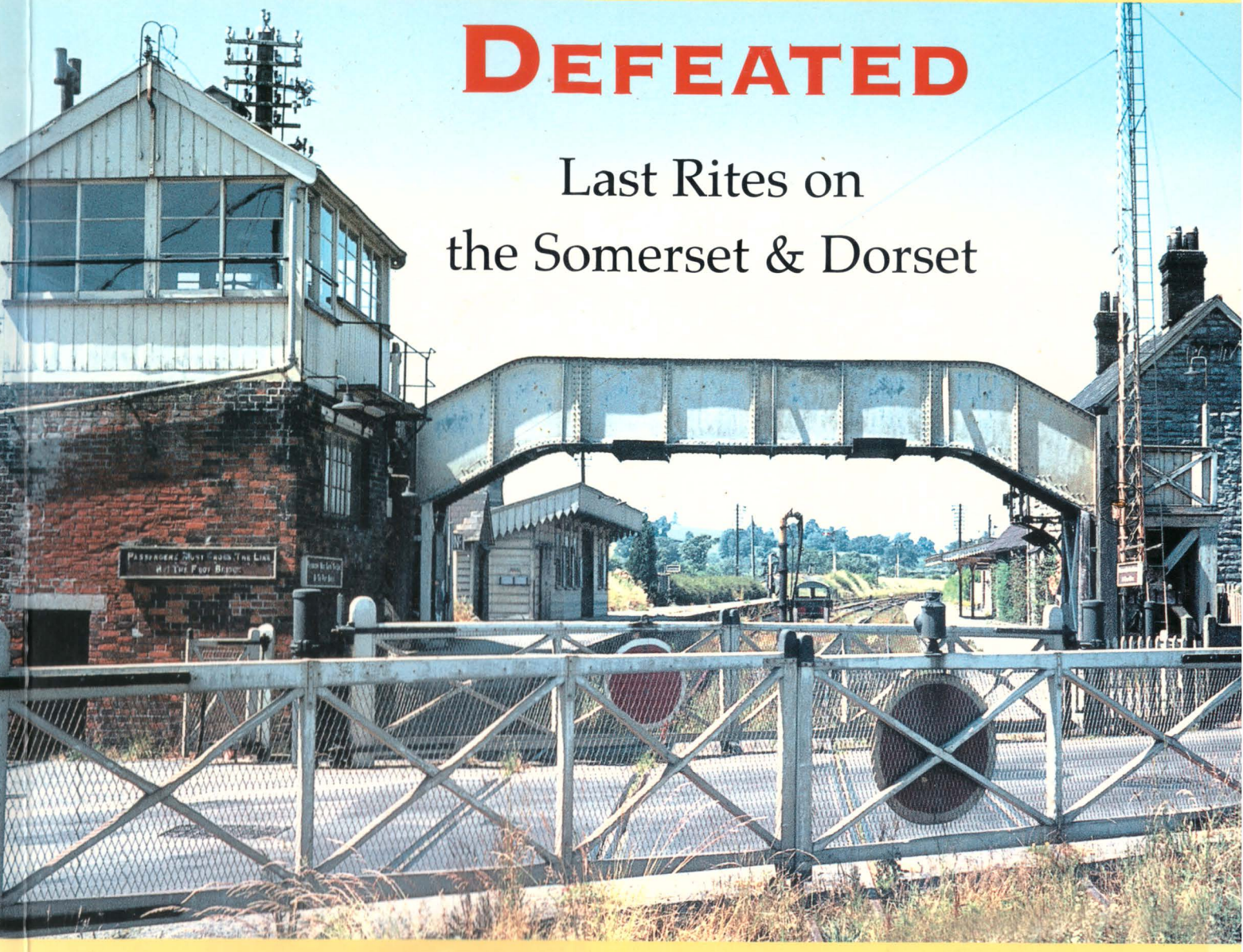
Sabotaged & Defeated

Last Rites on the Somerset & Dorset



Jeffery Grayer

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In Memoriam - **WLG & KMG**

Front Cover: The once busy junction at Evercreech now stands silent. Although services had been withdrawn some 17 months before the date of this picture the station is still substantially intact, only the grass grown tracks indicate that sentence has been passed, the axe had fallen and that there would be no reprieve.

Frontispiece: Jolting across Charlton Road Viaduct on a dank November day in 1967. A speed limit of 15 mph applied throughout the section of line used by the recovery trains. The outward run from Radstock was beset by fog which had begun to clear by Masbury and visibility was better by the time Shepton was reached.

Right: Combe Down cameo. Framed by the north portal of Combe Down tunnel the permanent way curves away on a falling gradient of 1 in 50 towards Bath Junction. At this date, November 1967, the line only played host to the occasional track removal train and it was to be only a matter of weeks before these too had passed into history.

Rear Cover: Literally the end of the line as track recovery makes its inexorable way north of Midford goods yard, leaving just the sleepers and chairs to be reclaimed on this section. The cant and curvature of the alignment are typical of this stretch of the Bath extension, only single track being affordable between Midford and Bath Junction due to the difficult nature of the terrain.

All photographs are by the author unless otherwise credited.

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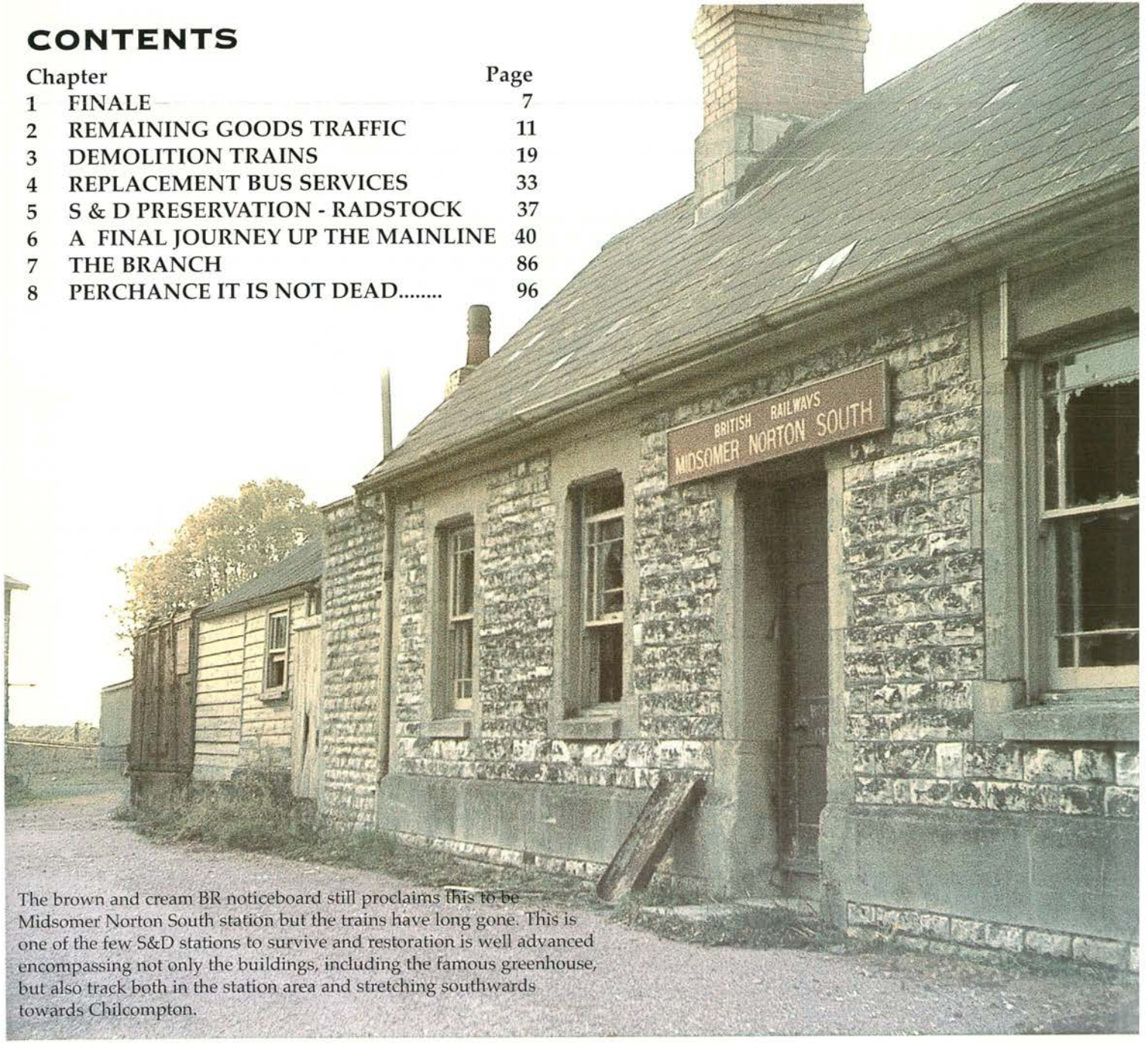


The brown and cream BR noticeboard still proclaims this to be Midsomer Norton South station but the trains have long gone. This is one of the few S&D stations to survive and restoration is well advanced encompassing not only the buildings, including the famous greenhouse, but also track both in the station area and stretching southwards towards Chilcompton.

INTRODUCTION

"The Somerset & Dorset had become a legend in its own lifetime. By 1874 it was already known as the "Slow & Dirty"; slow and dirty it remained in popular prejudice, and though its loyal servants assured one that it was "Swift and Delightful", they were to scrawl "Sabotaged and Defeated" in the dust that accumulated on the benches of their derelict stations."

The Somerset & Dorset Railway by Robin Atthill (David & Charles 1967)

Asked to name the significant events of 1966 many people will automatically think of the England World Cup victory, others may think of the Aberfan disaster or in a lighter vein perhaps the attempts to mate giant pandas in captivity when Chi Chi was shipped from Russia – unsuccessfully as it turned out. However, the S&D devotee will always associate this year with the end of their beloved line. Sunday March 6 it was when the last trains ran. Decrepit locomotives and stock comprising the last pathetic remnants of the passenger service, constituting an emergency timetable introduced on January 3rd, had completed their journeys the night before with the last scheduled arrival into Bath at 22.25, although due to the numbers making the last journey and the inevitable delays en route, it was not until over 80 minutes later that Stanier 8F 48706 and Standard tank No. 80043 finally drew to a halt at Green Park.

Sunday saw the passage of two specials, perhaps the most memorable of which was that double headed by two unrebuilt Bulleid Pacifics Nos. 34006 and 34057, unforgettably described breasting Masbury summit in the gathering gloom by Robin Atthill. For most S&D fans that was it, hard to take in but after a long time dying there really would be no more.

Although the scheduled passenger service had gone this was far from the end of railway activity and it was surprising what interest could still be had from what appeared to be a moribund system. There have been more books published on the S&D than perhaps any other line covering its heyday, the shameful years of rundown by the Western region, "Then and Now" comparisons and a detailed history of post closure events. These books satisfy an appetite for a line which seems to grow with the passing years and certainly shows no sign of diminishing. To date there has not been an album showing the final phase of the story with colour when demolition trains ran, freight services for coal, milk and general goods operated, an abortive preservation scheme flowered then faded away, a fly ash terminal was constructed in connection with the building of the M5 motorway, and finally contractors' locos operated and demolition gangs tore up the track, laid waste the stations and in many places erased the line from the map as if it had never been. Ultimately a sad period but nonetheless a fascinating one.

Not all is decay and desolation however, as the images presented here retain a haunting atmospheric quality made poignant by the fact that nearly 40 years on from closure they can still stir the emotions of the general railway enthusiast, the S&D admirer and the modeller alike.

The very size of the demolition task involved in such a major closure, together with the isolated freight services which ran for some time, meant that it took a number of years before the last remnant of track was removed. This gave plenty of opportunity to capture this fascinating process on film.

Although not lucky enough to travel on the line during its operational life the fact that I was a student at Bristol University from 1967-70 did give me the opportunity to visit the line and to make three memorable journeys upon it – in November 1967 from Radstock to Evercreech Junction and back secreted in the guards van of a Hymek hauled demolition train; the following month from Bason Bridge to Highbridge yard in the cab of another Hymek hauling a milk train; and later whilst working in Bristol in 1971 courtesy of the S&D Railway Trust when, behind steam, I travelled from Radstock North to Writhlington Colliery. I also witnessed BR steam on the southern part of the line when on 16th October 1966 I turned my 8mm cine camera on the LCGB special 'topped and tailed' by Standards Nos 77014 and 76026 on a run up to Blandford.

Not having access to a car for much of this period, public transport, including sampling the much vaunted railway replacement bus services, bicycle and shanks' pony were the only way to view the line. This did not prevent me from making numerous site visits to wander at will through deserted signalboxes, their panes of glass uniformly smashed, and to ponder on silent platforms and in waiting rooms that would never again echo to the sound of passengers. In retrospect a surprising amount of infrastructure, which today would be considered highly collectable, was still to be seen. One particular occasion comes to mind, on the last day of steam on the Southern Region, 9th July 1967,a glorious summer day when I was returning from a pre-college visit to Bristol, unusually by car, following the line down from Evercreech to Blandford. I was photographing on Evercreech Junction, still substantially intact with signs and nameboards in place, when the unmistakable sound of a steam whistle carried over the fields from the south. Although I later discovered that this emanated from one of the very last freight workings from Weymouth passing through Castle Cary, some couple of miles away, and not an aural reincarnation of what was a commonplace sound at the junction only some 18 months previously, this will forever remain a haunting moment.

This book is largely based on my collection of original 35mm colour slides taken in the late 1960s and early 1970s generally on Agfa film. The layout of the book has been designed to cover the major features of the post-closure period rounding off with a last look at the line from Bournemouth – Bath covering also "The Branch" to Highbridge. Today much of the trackbed has been lost to nature or development, and many of the stations and other buildings demolished or adapted. Schemes abound, some more far fetched than others, to re-open parts of the line at a cost of millions of pounds but none has so far got very far. Thus this photographic record must stand as a remembrance of those twilight years in the history of a line whose fame has not dimmed with the passing of the years.

I would like to express my appreciation of the encouragement given by Simon Castens of Titfield Thunderbolt Books and pay tribute to the seminal work of Tim Deacon (S&D Post - Closure Steward) in "The S&D – Aftermath of the Beeching Axe" which provided confirmation where my diaries were lacking, regarding dates and progress of demolition contract work and freight operations. Of course any factual errors remain mine for which I plead "mea culpa" in advance. **Jeffery Grayer Somerset, March 2006**

View of a Hymek hauled demolition trains as it cautiously descends the grade from Midsomer Norton and crosses Five Arches viaduct which spans the ex GWR Bristol – Frome line. The last reported appearance of a Hymek on these trains was on June 9th 1968 after which time only Class 08 shunters ventured to the railhead at Moorewood, Class 35s being confined to haulage from Radstock.

SABOTAGED & DEFEATED

Last Rites on the Somerset & Dorset

TRESPASSING ON RAILWAY
NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT UNDER THE
37TH SECTION OF THE SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY ACT
PERSON WHO SHALL TRESPASS UPON ANY OF THE LINES OF
RAILWAY BELONGING OR LEASED TO OR WORKED BY THE SOUTH
WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE
RAILWAY COMPANY SHALL ON CONVICTION BE LIABLE TO A
NOT EXCEEDING 40/- & PUBLIC WARNING IS HEREBY GIVEN
TO PERSONS NOT TO TRESPASS UPON THE RAILWAY.
DATED THIS 5TH DAY AUGUST 1908
GODFREY KNIGHT
WILLIAM CLOWES

CHRONOLOGY

3 January 1966	Emergency Timetable introduced
5 March 1966	Last passenger service trains
6 March 1966	RCTS and SLS Specials

REMAINING GOODS SERVICES

Bath Junction	–	Twerton Bakery Siding	(Ceased November 1967)
Broadstone	–	Blandford Forum	(Ceased January 1969)
Highbridge	–	Bason Bridge creamery	(Ceased October 1972)
Radstock	–	Writhlington Colliery	(Ceased November 1973)

DEMOLITION TIMETABLE

Blandford Forum – Broadstone	(December 1969 – October 1970)
Blandford Forum – Midsomer Norton	(February 1967 – July 1968)
Midsomer Norton – Radstock	(1969)
Radstock – Writhlington	(May 1976 – August 1976)
Writhlington – Bath Junction	(July 1967 – June 1968)
Bath Green Park station and Depot	(October 1966 – May 1967)
Evercreech Junction North – Bason Bridge	(January 1967 – October 1967)
Bason Bridge – Highbridge	(December 1972 – February 1973)
Highbridge Station and Depot	(November 1966 – February 1967)

FINALE

The afternoon of the last day of public services, 5th March 1966, sees Ivatt tank No. 41307 double heading with Standard tank No. 80138 on a 3-coach train typical of the last years, crossing Waterloo Road viaduct, Shepton Mallet with the 1400 Templecombe – Bath service. The use of two locomotives on such a lightweight train was brought about by the need to work as many engines as possible to Green Park for subsequent disposal before closure the following day. *Courtesy Colour-Rail*

Motive power for the LCGB special of 5th March 1966 in the form of immaculately turned out unrebuilt Bulleid Pacifics Nos. 34006 *Bude* and 34057 *Biggin Hill*. These locomotives which had taken over the train at Templecombe wait in the centre road at Evercreech Junction ready to continue northwards following the return of the special from a run over the Highbridge branch hauled by a brace of Ivatt tanks Nos. 41307 and 41269. *Courtesy Meteor Film Services*

SPECIALS OVER THE S&D AFTER CLOSURE IN MARCH 1966

Date	
21 May 1966	Broadstone – Blandford Loco 77014 BYTS "Hampshire Explorer"
11 June 1966	Blandford – Brighton Loco 34012 Hall & Woodhouse
16 October 1966	Broadstone – Blandford Locos 76026 / 77014 LCGB "Dorset & Hants"
25 March 1967	Broadstone – Blandford Loco 41320 MRTS "Hants & Dorset Branch Flyer"
6 April 1968	Radstock – Writhlington 4 car DMU RCTS "Thames-Avon"
15 June 1968	Blandford – Kew D 6540 Hall & Woodhouse
3 Nov 1968	Broadstone – Blandford E6108 / D1986 LCGB
14 Nov 1968	Radstock – Writhlington 3 car DMU WRC / GWS Highbridge – Bason Bridge "Somerset Rambler II"
16 Nov 1968	Mangotsfield – Bath 3 car DMU LCGB
25-30 April 1970	Bath D847 Bulmers Exhibition Train
April 1972	Radstock – Writhlington 3 car DMU LCGB "Cheddar Valley"

Above: Several steam powered specials traversed the southern section of the line to Blandford after closure to passenger traffic. The "Dorset & Hants" railtour of 16th October 1966, which was topped and tailed by Nos. 77014 and 76026, is seen on the single line section between Broadstone and Corfe Mullen junction. *Courtesy Colour Rail*

Below: On 21st May 1966 No. 77014 is seen at the up platform, which was officially out of use by this time, at Blandford having just arrived with the British Young Traveller Society "Hampshire Explorer". This was a 4 coach special, the Standard 2-6-0 having to make the return trip tender first. *Courtesy Meteor Film Services*

Above: No. 53808 was withdrawn in March 1964 after a working life of nearly 40 years and was one of the fortunate pair of eleven Fowler 2- 8- 0s designed especially for the S&D, which found their way to the South Wales scrapyard of Dai Woodham. The 7F is captured during its sojourn at Barry whence it was liberated in October 1970 and transferred to the S&D Railway Circle site at Radstock. Here it stayed until January 1976 when it moved again, this time to the West Somerset Railway scene of its subsequent restoration to full working order.
Left: No. 53809 was also rescued from Barry scrapyard in December 1975. Its home for many years has been the Midland Railway Centre where is has been overhauled a second time for use on preserved lines. It participated in a return to Bath Green Park station in early March 2006, the 40th anniversary of the closure of the S&D.
Both, Roger Hardingham

REMAINING FREIGHT SERVICES

The signalman of Radstock West box hands over the token to the driver of the doyen of the Hymek Class No. D7000 in November 1967. The train, conveying coal from Writhlington Colliery, was bound for Portishead Power Station via the North Somerset line over the relatively recent connection with the S&D put in following closure. This route only lasted until July 1968 when serious storms and flooding severed the line near Pensford. As this damage was never repaired this necessitated a much longer trip to Bristol via Frome.

Above: Hymek hauled empties from Portishead via the North Somerset line are held at Radstock North gates awaiting clearance into the station and on to Writhlington Colliery. Although the signalbox here was demolished in 1967 the station buildings and signboard remain in situ in these February 1968 views.
Below: From the footbridge, a full load of Writhlington coal is seen heading across Radstock North level crossing to gain access to the spur line to the Bristol & North Somerset line which it would follow en route to Portishead Power Station.

The motorists of Radstock no doubt breathed a sigh of relief when passenger services were withdrawn from both stations in the town as long tailbacks were legendary when one, or worse, both sets of level crossing gates had to be opened for trains. The remaining goods traffic was surely only a minor inconvenience to road users as Class 08 shunter No. D3182 leaves the former GWR station with coal empties. Note the remains of the platform end water crane, now missing its bag.

Above: Interior of Radstock West box still functioning in 1967 to supervise movements over former GWR lines in the area but also to cater for traffic from Writhlington over the S&D stub for onward transmission via the North Somerset line to Bristol and ultimately Portishead Power Station. It was the signalman of this box who kindly arranged for me to travel in the brake van of a demolition train from Radstock to Evercreech Junction in November 1967.

Left: Radstock West box situated at the west end of the former GWR station, controlled both the adjacent level crossing over the busy Bath road and since demolition of the North box also traffic over the former S&D route. The distinctive roof of the Market Hall is visible in the background. The box was subsequently dismantled and moved in November 1975 to Didcot Railway Centre where it has since been re-erected.

Hymek Class D7033 arrives at Bason Bridge on 2nd December 1967 and the second man alights from the cab to open the level crossing gates to allow access to the Unigate creamery. A few words with the driver secured a cab ride for me on the return trip.

Above: The Unigate Creamery and sidings, bathed in winter sunshine and situated along the bank of the River Brue, were going full blast in this November 1968 view. Several milk tanks in the sidings in the background are awaiting their turn to be filled prior to their return journey over the remaining stub of the old main line to Highbridge. The creamery continued to be served by rail until October 1972 when the line was severed by construction of the M5 motorway. Unigate sold on the creamery which was eventually closed in 1987.

Left With full tanks hitched behind and the crossing gates closed to the railway, D7033 prepares to move off into the gloom of the winter's afternoon with the return working to Highbridge.

Blandford Forum showed some evidence, in the goods yard behind the signalbox, of goods traffic being carried in the summer of 1967. However, the only regular items by this time comprised coal and fertiliser with some hops for the local brewery. All this could be carried comfortably by one or two trains per week. Note the interesting survival of the platform end water crane complete with bag.

The scene at Highbridge during construction of the flyash terminal during the spring of 1971. The new connection to the WR main line can be seen in the left foreground and the ramp is taking shape to allow discharge of the ash to the ground some 25 feet below for onward transport by lorries to the M5 motorway construction site some short distance away. In the right background only part of the former works building still stands. The remains of the branch were protected by a new GWR type signal post and the BR control office was housed in the wooden hut on the only remaining S&D platform No.5.

DEMOLITION TRAINS

Whilst in the vicinity of the northern portal of Combe Down tunnel I could hear the unmistakable throb of diesel engines deep within the confines of the bore. A few minutes later a Class 08 shunter emerged into the daylight. Expecting to see a train of wagons being towed the sight that met my eyes was rather surprising.....

.....for there were no wagons only a few lengths of rail chained to the rear drawbar gouging out the sleepers as they were dragged unceremoniously down the grade to Bath Junction. This can hardly have been an economic method of recovery but in view of the restrictions of the tunnel this was the easiest way to manhandle lengths of rail in such a confined space. It was a good job the sleepers didn't have to put up with much of this treatment.

Right: 7th May 1968 sees a Hymek waiting in the down platform at Binegar ready to receive a demolition train hauled by a Class 08 shunter from the railhead which at that date was nearby at Masbury. The signal levers, like stumps of rotten teeth, can be seen protruding from the remains of the signalbox which has already been partially demolished.

Below: A busy scene at Binegar with locomotives occupying both up and down roads. The wagons will be deposited by the shunter and collected by the Hymek. This track recovery activity was part of one of the four principal contracts for dismantling the S&D in this instance covering the section from Blandford northwards to Radstock. The work began in February 1967 and was not completed until July 1968.

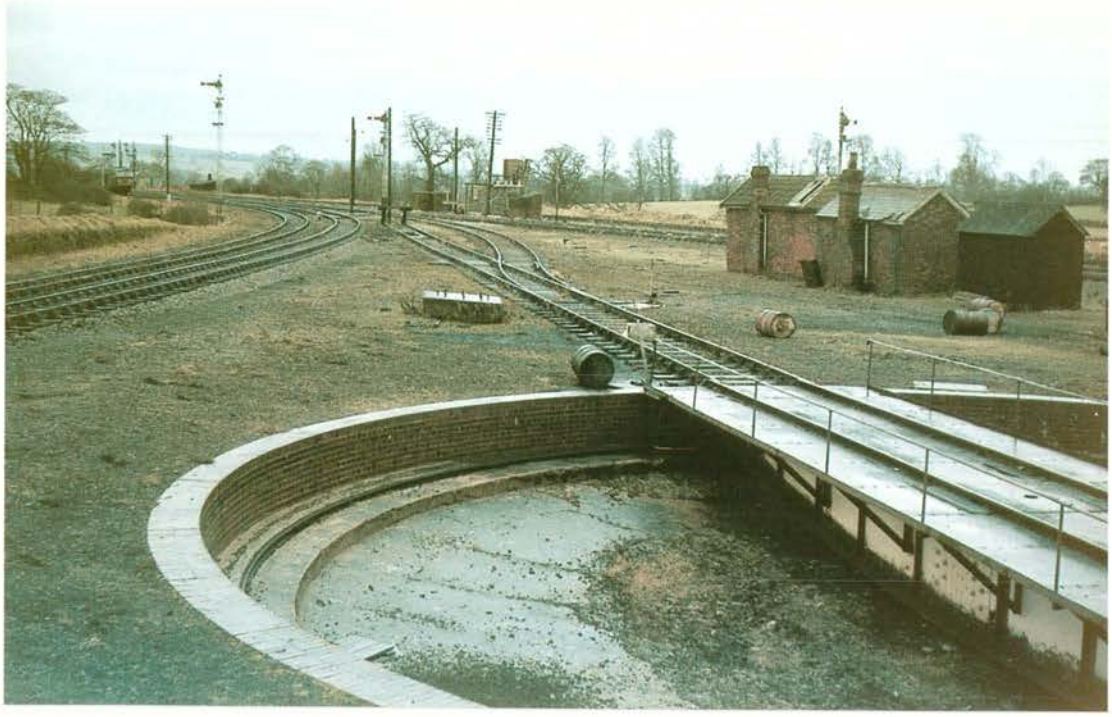
Heading north with a train of recovered sleepers collected from Evercreech Junction, the Hymek hauled consist passes Binegar wrong road. At this time, November 1967, the station was still reasonably complete with its signalbox intact.

Viewed from the platform of the guards van a Hymek hauled demolition train grinds northwards through a deserted Shepton Mallet (Charlton Road) on 23rd November 1967. Note the redundant cattle pens on the left and the water crane still in situ on the down platform.

Right: Having passed under Bridge No. 70 Masbury Station Bridge the train continues to the summit where the 1 in 50 slog up from Evercreech Junction will be over.

Below: Recovered sleepers round the curve north of Evercreech Junction in a Hymek hauled consist on a dismal Saturday in January 1968. Weekend working had been necessary as the contractors had slipped four months behind schedule and penalty payments were looming. Note that the train is travelling wrong road on this section of line due to the state of the other line, one track being sufficient for this traffic.

Hymek D7015 runs round at Evercreech Junction in November 1967 having brought in the train of empty wagons seen parked on the down road. It will then collect a full load for its return journey to Radstock.



Above: A very wet February day in 1968 sees a rake of recovery wagons parked in the up platform at Evercreech Junction. Judging by the angle of the PW trolley it appears to have had an axle removed!

Left: The turntable at Evercreech Junction seen in January 1968 with a Hymek ready to set off northwards in the left background. It would appear that the table is still operable although with diesel haulage of the remaining recovery trains there was no necessity for using its services again.

Right: A rake of wagons full of recovered sleepers waits at the up platform for onward transhipment whilst a guard's van and a couple of empty wagons occupy the central road.

Below: Passing the burnt out remains of Evercreech Junction North box this guards van view shows a recovery train gently easing around the severe curve of the Bath extension in November 1967. The destruction of the box on the evening of Saturday 5 March, after the passage of the last service train and necessitating special working arrangements for the two specials which ran on the following day, still remains an enigma to this day.

Sheep in the adjacent field seem bemused to see rail traffic again which they might have thought had all but vanished. A Class 08 shunter is held at the gates at Evercreech Junction whilst engaged in marshalling its train of empty wagons. The railhead at this time, January 1968, was at Wyke Champflower a short distance away to the south.

The rose covered rural idyll that was Stalbridge. This July 1967 view shows the rarely photographed contractor's loco that was used for a very short time at the beginning of the main contract for track removal from Blandford to Radstock.

HITCHING A RIDE

Never having been fortunate enough to travel over the S&D during its operational life I was pleased to have the opportunity to rectify this omission when in October 1967 I moved to Bristol. One of my first visits to the railways of the neighbourhood was to Radstock. By the winter of 1967 the passenger service over the S&D had been gone for some 20 months, the last service train having run on 5th March 1966. Long gone were the Frome – Bristol passenger trains which had ceased to run in 1959. However, Radstock was still active with freight traffic from what were to become the last two remaining pits in the Somerset Coalfield at Writhlington and Kilmersdon Collieries which still had some six years' life in them. Coal was despatched to Portishead power station via the ex GWR North Somerset line at this time and there was some wagon repair traffic to Marcroft's Wagon Works located a short distance along the former Frome branch although by November of 1967 this was handling its final few repairs. In 1969 the wagon works was partially reopened but within two years had closed permanently.

My time in Radstock that day was well spent for I visited the West signalbox, the S&D box having been demolished back in the summer, and got chatting to the signalman. From him I learned something of the recent history of railways in the Radstock area and he treated me to some very forthright views on the parentage of the good Doctor (Beeching)! More usefully I learned that trains, albeit those involved with ripping up the old line, were still operating over part of the S&D in fact as far as Evercreech Junction. Recovered materials from the railheads, which at that time on the down line was just north of bridge 118, which carried the S&D over the ex GWR main line near Cole, and on the up line was some ¼ mile further back at Bruton Road level crossing, were stored at the junction awaiting onward transmission in trainloads to Radstock. There were four major contracts covering demolition of the S&D, one of which encompassed the section from one mile north of Blandford Forum to Radstock. Work had started at the Blandford end in February 1967 but was not to be completed until July 1968. Even then the contractors did not reach Radstock as BR had to terminate the contract whilst the railhead was at Midsomer Norton station. This was caused by the disastrous storm and resultant floods of 10th July which led to much damage, including road bridges washed away at Keynsham and Pensford, and some loss of life in the North Somerset area. Amongst the casualties was the North Somerset line breached by flooding near Pensford. In view of the cost of repairs, and anticipated limited life of the line, it was decreed that the line should be closed on and from that date. Hasty arrangements were made to reopen the mothballed Kilmersdon Exchange Sidings – Mells Road section of the erstwhile Radstock - Frome line to allow coal traffic to be taken out to Bristol by the circuitous route of Frome, Westbury and Bath. Faced with this situation BR were no longer able to provide wagons for the contractor's use hence the contract termination. It would not be until 1969 that BR staff removed the final lengths of track between Midsomer Norton and Radstock on an ad hoc basis using road transport. However, at the time of my visit it was BR's responsibility to provide motive power and wagons to handle materials recovered by the contractor. The signalman said that if I would like to present myself at 8am one morning it might be possible for me to ride in the guards van on such a trip. Needing no second bidding I duly arranged to be there the following week, on Wednesday 23rd November to be exact.

Having no car I had to rely on public transport to get me from Bristol to Radstock at an early hour and courtesy of a Bristol Omnibus service which left Marlborough Street Bus Station shortly after 6am I was able to make the connection. The day dawned damp and misty, typical of that season, and having met the signalman and been introduced to the guard of the train I was duly secreted in the guards van with instructions to stay out of sight at Evercreech in case an Inspector was about ! The fire that was already going well in the cast iron stove was a welcome comfort on this raw morning.

Shortly after 8.15 am our loco, in the shape of Hymek No. D7045, duly arrived from the Bristol direction and coupled up to our rake of 20 or so empty wooden bodied trucks, a brake coach and bogie bolster wagons with brake vans at each end of the train, which was stabled at Radstock West station. We proceeded cautiously over the level crossing, still operated by wheel from the adjacent box, and up the North Somerset line to the ground frame adjacent to the spur, laid in after the S&D closed in March 1966 to give access to Writhlington Colliery. Having cleared the points we set back over the spur to gain the S&D down line, which had been slewed to make the connection, and so passed over Radstock North gates, operated by hand by the West box signalman, into the station where we crossed over to the up line. A further change of direction here enabled us to proceed "wrong road" on the S&D up line over Five Arches bridge crossing the North Somerset below us. Progress was stately up the 1 in 50 bank necessitated not only by the incline but by the state of the track which obviously since closure had received minimal if any maintenance so consequently a 15mph limit had been placed on the line. Reaching Midsomer Norton South we regained the down line where the points were clipped behind us to ensure that any runaway wagons would be dealt with by the catch points which diverted them into Norton Hill Colliery yard. The station presented a forlorn appearance being heavily vandalised with the famous greenhouse, where the blooms had once been raised that had earned the station prizes in the past, in a ruinous state. The mist that had not yet cleared dogged us through Chilcompton, where I recall seeing the water crane bag hanging from its stanchion, but started to lift by the time Binegar was reached. Here the station and signalbox did not look in too bad a state, probably the proximity of former stationmaster Norman Down's house had some deterrent effect on the local vandals.

We ground on up the bank to drop down over the summit and through lonely Masbury made more eerie by the mist which was still lingering at that altitude, and where again the stationmasters house was still occupied. The guards brake was screwed down after passing through Winsor Hill tunnel as we descended towards the impressive Charlton Road Viaduct before stopping briefly at Shepton Mallet (Charlton Road) where similar signs of dereliction and destruction were evident as had been seen at Midsomer Norton. Resuming our journey we dropped down over Prestleigh Viaduct and came to Evercreech New where the signalbox had been closed in October 1964 and had already been demolished. All too soon we were rounding the sharp curve where the Bath extension met the former mainline from Highbridge and came to a stop at Evercreech Junction shortly before 10am having covered the 16 miles from Radstock in something over an hour and a half.

Here the station and infrastructure were pretty much intact save for the North signalbox which had mysteriously burnt out after the passage of the last service train. A diesel shunter, on my visit No. D4025, was stationed at the Junction to take wagons to and from the

railhead and to marshal them in the remaining sidings. Having pushed the empty wagons into the middle road the Hymek uncoupled from the train and crossed to the up line before backing down a rake of loaded wagons onto the guards van, containing yours truly, at the rear of the train which it had just brought in from Radstock. As there was no sign of an Inspector I was given the all clear to alight from the brake van and wander around the station. Dumped in the middle road, where Mendip bankers had once waited, was a Wickham pw trolley B29W minus one set of wheels. This had been at the junction since February and would remain there after all track had been recovered being finally removed by lorry in the summer of 1968. All too soon the consist was complete and after a brief interval for the inevitable "brew up" a blast on the hydraulic's horns signalled that we were away again this time with some 25 wagons of recovered sleepers in tow.

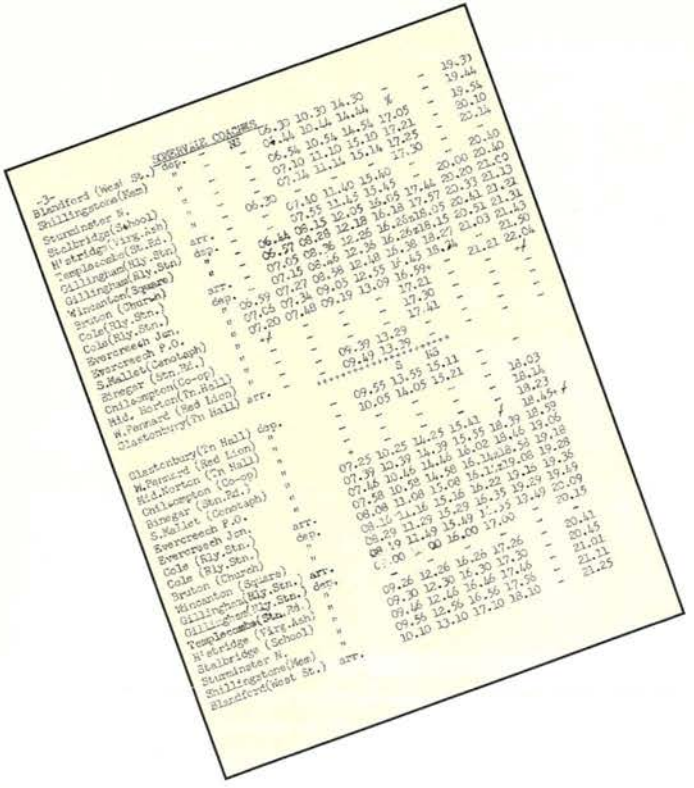
It is interesting to speculate what a diesel operated S&D might have been like, certainly Hymeks would have been candidates as likely motive power in the early 1960s although by 1967 they were half way through their short lives. In fact June of the following year was to see their last use on the S&D. By that time the contractors' base had reached Midsomer Norton and Class 08 shunters sufficed for the short haul down the bank to Radstock where Class 35s took over.

By now the weather had improved somewhat and as we swung away onto the Bath extension thoughts of the hopes of the promoters came crowding in as I wondered how they would have felt to see their hard won extension being ripped up 8 years short of its century. Our speed was pedestrian now as the loaded wagons began to make their presence felt on the 1 in 50 up grade between Evercreech New and Cannards Grave. On through Shepton to Masbury we went until the summit was cleared and we dipped down towards Binegar. As I had to be back in Bristol by early afternoon I unfortunately had to take the decision to cut short the return journey deciding that the best place to do this was between Binegar and Chilcompton. I hopped off the moving brakevan, after thanking the guard for his co-operation, as we clattered over Bridge No. 59 which crossed the A37 Bristol Road soon after Moorewood Sidings. As I stood on the ballast and watched the receding brake van a memorable ride, which I never thought I would have the opportunity to make, had come to an end, the memory of which still remains vivid in my mind some 38 years after the event.

REPLACEMENT BUS SERVICES

Rail cocks a final snook at the expense of road as a Somervale Coaches replacement bus service on the Blandford – Glastonbury route is held at the gates at Evercreech Junction whilst a Class 08 shunter rumbles across with a single brake van. At this time, January 1968, the railhead was at Wyke Champflower and the following month tracklifting would reach the station itself. The gates had to operated manually by this time as the mechanism had been disconnected from the adjacent signalbox.

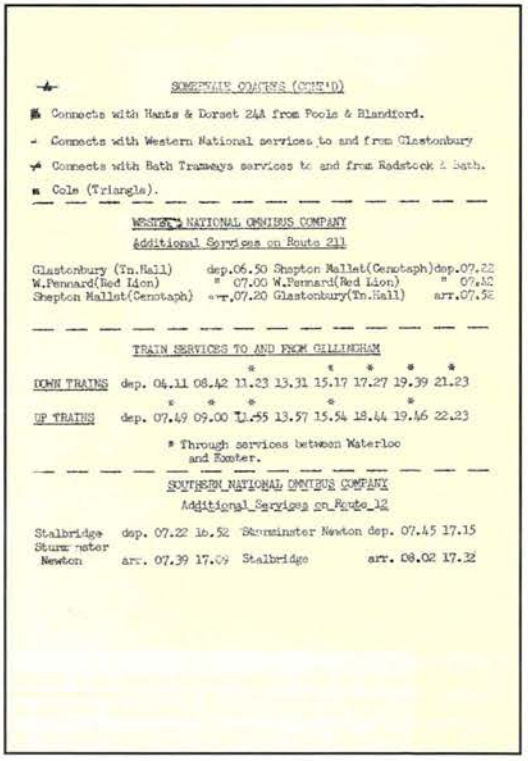
The Somervale Coaches replacement bus service photographed during its generous 10 minute layover at Cole station yard on 29 January 1972. Needless to say there were no passengers waiting to avail themselves of the service on this occasion.



-3-

SOMERVALE COACHES

Blandford (West St.)	dep.	-	-	06.39	10.30	14.30	-	-	19.33
Shillingstone(Mes)	"	-	-	06.44	10.44	14.44	-	-	19.44
Sturminster N.	"	-	-	06.54	10.54	14.54	17.05	-	19.54
Stalbridge(School)	"	-	-	07.10	11.10	15.10	17.21	-	20.10
N'stridge (Virg.Ash)	"	-	-	07.14	11.14	15.14	17.25	-	20.14
Templecombe(Stn.Rd.)	"	-	-	-	-	-	17.30	-	-
Gillingham(Rly.Stn)	"	-	06.30	07.10	11.40	15.40	-	20.00	20.40
Wincanton(Square)	"	-	-	07.55	12.05	15.45	17.44	20.20	21.00
Bruton (Church)	"	-	-	08.15	12.18	16.18	17.57	20.41	21.13
Cole(Rly.Stn.)	arr.	-	06.44	08.28	12.28	16.28	18.05	20.51	21.21
Evercreech Jun.	dep.	-	06.57	08.36	12.36	16.36	18.15	21.03	21.31
Evercreech P.O.	"	-	07.03	08.40	12.40	16.38	18.27	-	21.43
S.Wallet(Cenotaph)	"	-	07.15	08.56	12.55	16.54	18.44	21.21	21.50
Bruton(Sn.Rd.)	"	-	07.25	09.05	13.09	16.59	-	-	22.04
Milborne Port(Co-op)	"	-	07.30	09.10	-	-	-	-	-
Mid.Norton(Tn.Hall)	"	-	07.41	09.19	-	17.21	-	-	-
W.Pennard(Red Lion)	"	-	-	-	-	17.30	-	-	-
Glastonbury(Tn Hall)	arr.	-	-	-	-	17.41	-	-	-
Glastonbury(Tn Hall)	dep.	-	-	09.39	13.29	-	-	-	-
W.Pennard(Red Lion)	"	-	-	09.49	13.39	-	-	-	-
Mid.Norton (Tn Hall)	"	-	-	S	S	-	-	-	-
Milborne Port(Co-op)	"	-	-	09.55	13.55	15.11	-	-	18.03
Bruton (Sn.Rd.)	"	-	-	10.05	14.05	15.21	-	-	18.14
Evercreech P.O.	"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18.23
Evercreech Jun.	"	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18.45
Cole (Rly.Stn.)	arr.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18.59
Cole (Rly.Stn.)	dep.	-	-	10.25	14.25	15.41	-	-	19.06
Bruton (Church)	"	-	-	10.39	14.39	15.55	18.39	18.59	19.18
Wincanton (Square)	"	-	-	07.25	10.59	14.46	16.02	18.46	19.28
Gillingham(Rly.Stn.)	arr.	-	-	07.39	12.39	14.46	16.11	18.08	19.36
Gillingham(Rly.Stn.)	dep.	-	-	07.46	10.46	14.58	16.17	19.19	19.49
Templecombe(Stn.Rd.)	"	-	-	07.58	10.58	15.08	16.22	19.29	20.09
N'stridge (Virg.Ash)	"	-	-	08.08	13.08	15.18	16.35	19.49	20.35
Stalbridge (School)	"	-	-	08.14	11.16	15.29	17.15	17.49	-
Sturminster N.	"	-	-	08.29	11.29	15.49	17.00	-	20.41
Shillingstone(Mes)	"	-	-	08.39	11.49	16.00	17.26	-	20.45
Blandford(West St.)	arr.	-	-	09.00	12.00	16.26	17.46	-	21.01
				09.26	12.26	16.26	17.55	-	21.11
				09.30	12.30	16.30	17.59	-	21.25
				09.46	12.46	16.46	18.10	-	
				09.56	12.56	16.56			
				10.10	13.10	17.10			



SOMERVALE COACHES (CONT'D)

Connects with Hants & Dorset 24A from Poole & Blandford.

Connects with Western National services to and from Glastonbury

Connects with Bath Tramways services to and from Radstock & Bath.

Cole (Triangle).

WESTERN NATIONAL OMNIBUS COMPANY

Additional Services on Route 211

Glastonbury (Tn.Hall)	dep.06.50	Shepton Mallet(Cenotaph)	dep.07.22
W.Pennard(Red Lion)	" 07.00	W.Pennard(Red Lion)	" 07.32
Shepton Mallet(Cenotaph)	arr.07.20	Glastonbury(Tn.Hall)	arr.07.52

TRAIN SERVICES TO AND FROM GILLINGHAM

			*		*	*	*	
DOWN TRAINS	dep.	04.11	08.42	11.23	13.31	15.17	17.27	19.39	21.23
	*	*	*		*		*	
UP TRAINS	dep.	07.49	09.00	12.55	13.57	15.54	18.44	19.46	22.23

* Through services between Waterloo and Exeter.

SOUTHERN NATIONAL OMNIBUS COMPANY

Additional Services on Route 32

Stalbridge	dep.	07.22	16.52	Sturminster Newton dep.	07.45 17.15
Sturminster Newton	arr.	07.39	17.09	Stalbridge	arr. 08.02 17.32

Glastonbury Town Hall bus and coach stop on Saturday 29th January 1972 sees the 13:55 (SO) S&D replacement bus service, operated by Somervale Coaches of Midsomer Norton, waiting to depart, as the destination blind shows, on its 3 hour 15 minute marathon to Blandford Forum via Shepton Mallet, Bruton, Wincanton and Gillingham. I recall that myself and a friend constituted the only passengers as far as Shepton after which there were never more than 5 aboard all the way to Wincanton where we alighted. The vehicle, JBO 124 is an ex Western Welsh Weymann bodied Leyland Tiger Cub in far from pristine condition. On the opposite side of the street a Bristol Omnibus MW saloon, awaits departure with a Bristol service.

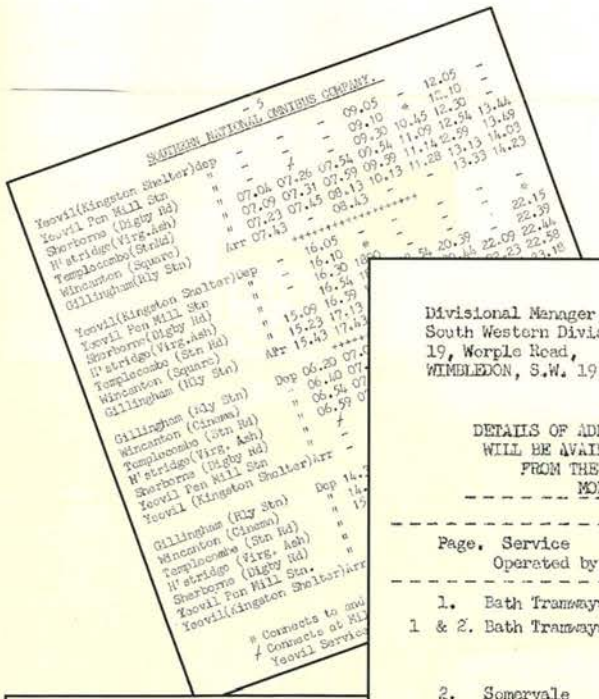
BRITISH RAIL

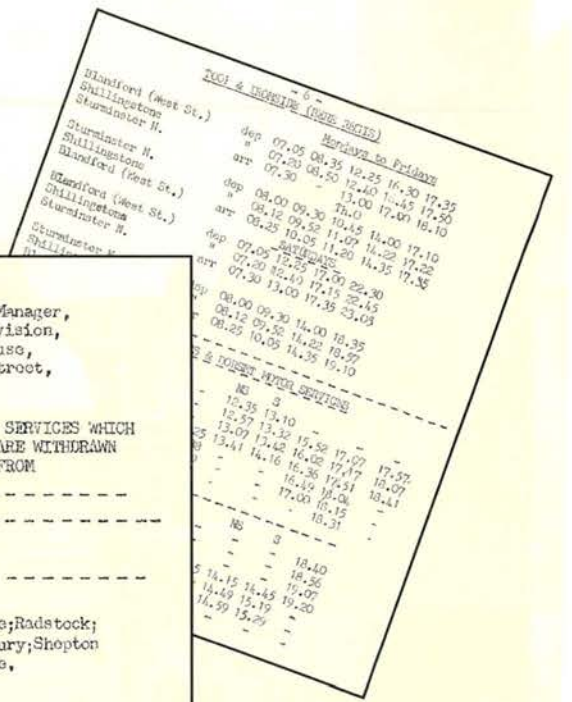
Divisional Manager,
South Western Division.
19, Worple Road,
WIMBLEDON, S.W. 19.

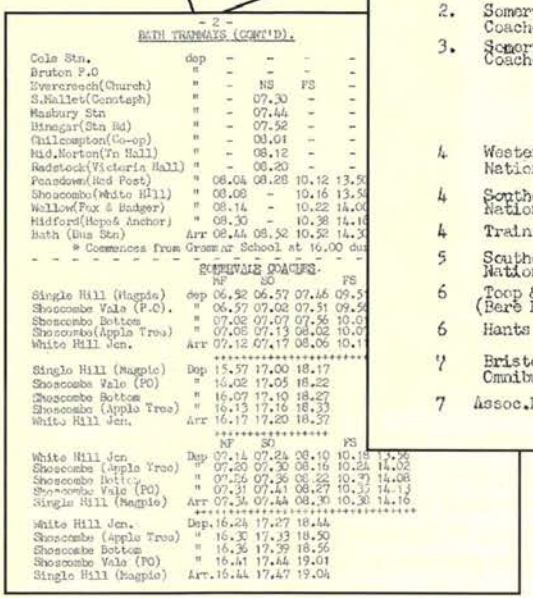
Divisional Manager,
Bristol Division,
Transom House,
Victoria Street,
Bristol.

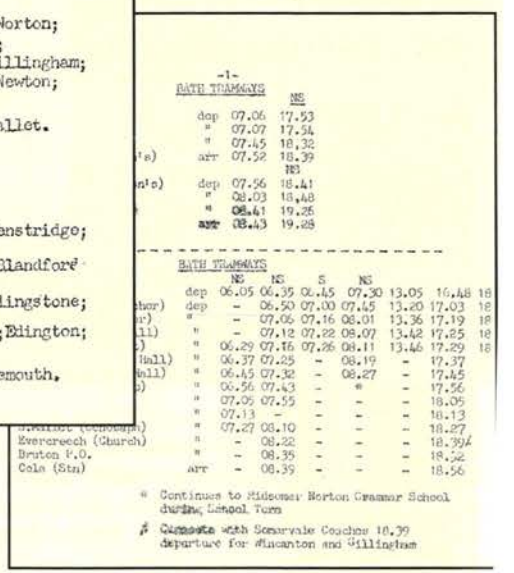
DETAILS OF ADDITIONAL AND/OR AMENDED OMNIBUS SERVICES WHICH WILL BE AVAILABLE WHEN PASSENGER SERVICES ARE WITHDRAWN FROM THE SOMERSET & DORSET LINE ON AND FROM MONDAY 7TH MARCH, 1966.

Page.	Service Operated by:-	POINTS SERVED :-
1.	Bath Tramways	Bath;Warmley;Shortwood.
1 & 2.	Bath Tramways	Bath;Midford;Wellow;Shoscombe;Radstock; Midsomer Norton;Binegar;Masbury;Shepton Mallet;Evercreech;Bruton;Cole.
2.	Somervale Coaches	Shoscombe;Single Hill.
3.	Somervale Coaches	Glastonbury;West Pennard;Midsomer Norton; Chilcompton;Binegar;Shepton Mallet; Evercreech;Cole;Bruton;Wincanton;Gillingham; Henstridge;Stalbridge;Sturminster Newton; Shillingstone;Blandford Forum.
4	Western National	Glastonbury;West Pennard;Shepton Mallet.
4	Southern National.	Stalbridge;Sturminster Newton.
4	Train services to and from Gillingham.	
5	Southern National	Gillingham;Wincanton;Templecombe;Henstridge; Sherborne Yeovil.
6	Toop & Ironside (Bere Regis)	Sturminster Newton;Shillingstone;Blandford Forum.
6	Hants & Dorset	Stalbridge;Sturminster Newton;Shillingstone; Blandford;Broadstone;Poole.
7	Bristol Omnibus	Wells;Glastonbury;Ashcott;Shapwick;Edington; Burtle;Eason Bridge;Highbridge.
7	Assoc.Motorways	Throughout service Bristol - Bournemouth.









S & D PRESERVATION - RADSTOCK

Christmas Eve 1971 and Bagnall 0-6-0 *Cranford No.2* waits by the gates at Radstock North to take a couple of brake vans up the one and a half mile section to Writhlington during a series of pre-Christmas steam days which operated that year. The station has benefited from a coat of paint and is looking quite presentable, the S&D Trust having negotiated with BR to lease it for an annual rental of £100.

Steam over Radstock again as the Bagnall saddle tank runs past a Ruston diesel, parked on one of the sidings that remained, on its way to Writhlington. The engine shed can be seen on the right. The S&D Trust operated at Radstock from 1970 – 76 when failure to raise the purchase price demanded by BR forced a move to Washford on the West Somerset Railway. Washford is now the home of the Ruston diesel which in its previous life operated at Bath Gas Works.

Right: In early 1973 Radstock shed played host to the resident BR Class 08 shunter, behind which lay S&D 7F No. 53808 and adjacent to which was a former Port of Bristol Authority Peckett 0-6-0 *Henbury* which now operates over the Bristol Harbour Railway. Of interest outside the shed are an ex-Longmoor Military Railway brakevan and Jinty No. 47493 which arrived from Barry in December 1972 and was subsequently transferred by rail to the East Somerset Railway in November 1973.

Below: Making a fine sight, *Cranford No. 2* and its brakevans leave Radstock North "wrong road" on another trip to Writhlington and back. Following transfer of its stock in 1975 the site at Radstock lay derelict until completely cleared for redevelopment in 1980.

A FINAL JOURNEY UP THE MAINLINE

Although a rake of coaches lies in one of the platform roads to the right, the main tracks have already been lifted in this view of Bournemouth West station, closed to passengers temporarily in August 1965 with total closure following a few weeks later. S&D trains were diverted to Central station or terminated at Parkstone. Most of the track was lifted in the area of West station in October 1965.

Only the boarded up ground floor windows belie the fact that this is a functioning terminus. However, it has been more than 2 years since Bournemouth West was first partially and then, in September 1965, totally closed and services diverted to the Central station. A fine array of classic cars of the period adorn the forecourt including a Hillman Minx, VW Beetle and Vauxhall Viva.

Platform end view of the empty terminus building with the majority of tracks removed, just one siding still serving a platform at the far left. In the distance can be seen an EMU near the carriage washing plant, the nearest that electric traction came to Bournemouth West. No refreshments here anymore, even though the sign still hangs from the roofing girders.

Right: Creekmoor Halt on the Bournemouth – Ringwood – Brockenhurst "Old Road" was also served by S&D trains. It was a typical Southern concrete construction and is seen here during the period when goods services still operated to Wimborne. This traffic ceased in 1977.

Below: Broadstone Junction still retains track to all four platforms in this 1972 view. By this date, however, goods traffic to Blandford had ceased and only oil to West Moors and goods to Wimborne were still carried.

Broadstone Junction still essentially complete albeit with amputated signal arms on the gantry controlling the divergence of the S&D to the left and the former LSWR "Old Road" to West Moors. Tablet exchanging apparatus still looks to be in place outside the junction box as is the 20 mph speed restriction sign.

Corfe Mullen Halt situated on the single line between Broadstone and Corfe Mullen Junction was opened in 1928 together with three other halts to try and tap local traffic but it survived only 28 years until closure in 1956. The deep cutting here was infilled after line closure and the halt simply buried.

The gates and box are still in place at Bailey Gate crossing, initially downgraded to a ground frame but since May 1968 closed completely, Blandford goods train crews having to operate the gates manually. It is readily apparent that only the down line is still in use in late 1968. The wooden portion of the box was demolished in 1970 but the brick base and house lasted into the 1990s although now replaced by a modern bungalow.

Bailey Gate box seen in April 1968 during its period of demotion to a ground frame controlling access to the adjacent creamery sidings. By the summer of that year milk traffic was spasmodic and by the following January all trains had ceased to run. The box was demolished in 1970.

Above: "Bailey Gate for Sturminster Marshall" proclaims the station sign in this view taken during the Blandford line's freight only existence in 1968. Only one line is in use to judge from the relative condition of the two tracks. Today the site is lost beneath a roundabout and road serving an industrial estate. *Below:* Track was removed from Bailey Gate in May 1970 and many lengths of rail can be seen with chairs still attached lying on the platform. The creamery in the background appears to be going strong but even this fell on hard times and changed ownership subsequently. The platforms were not removed until 1988.

Above: Spetisbury was opened in 1860 but following reduction to unstaffed status in 1934 closed prematurely in 1956. The buildings were demolished in the early 1960s but in this view a single track was still serving Blandford for goods traffic. This facility lasted for nearly 3 years after closure of the S&D to passengers.

Below: Charlton Marshall Halt illustrates the stages of track removal with the former up line reduced to ranks of sleepers adjacent to the platform whilst in the distance they still retain their chairs. Both concrete Southern style nameboards survive in this view taken a few weeks before goods traffic from Blandford ceased in January 1969.

Although closed in 1956 Stourpaine & Durweston Halt shows few signs of dereliction some eleven years on in 1967. Custody of the signboard from here, which still exists, is the subject of a regular cricket match between the two villages mentioned in the station's title, although willingness to relinquish safekeeping by the losers is not always apparent I understand.

Shillingstone basks in the summer sun of a July day in 1967. Track removal reached this location shortly before this date and odd lengths of rail still lie around the site. The red fire bucket board with its hooks in place can be seen on the right. This is the only Dorset Central station to survive until the present day and is currently the subject of a restoration project. The scene is very different today, with the buildings having received much restoration and a short length of track laid to receive a former BR 2-10-0 '9F' No. 92207 which arrived in December 2005 for restoration.

Above: The green sign propped up on the platform indicating that this is Sturminster Newton would surely command a high price today amongst collectors but proved just too large to liberate for one dependent upon public transport ! Track had only just been removed from the station area at the time of this July 1967 picture, the railhead being at the River Stour crossing a short distance to the north.

Right: The remains of the River Stour crossing, Bridge No. 171, which was a five span structure of wrought iron lattice girders with four flood arches on masonry piers, the latter structures being the only remnants of this bridge today.

Awaiting the inevitable Henstridge station is seen in the summer of 1967. At this time the track was being recovered northwards from Sturminster Newton and it was to be only another few weeks before the gangs reached this spot.

Approaching Templecombe from the south the S&D ran under the ex LSWR mainline where a maroon coloured Warship hauled train speeds through the now closed Templecombe Upper, past the water tower and on to Waterloo. Sleeper indentations can still be seen in the ballast of the line from Bournemouth, track having only been removed a few months prior to this spring 1968 view.

The original Dorset Central station at Templecombe stands behind the locomotive shed, both buildings having been incorporated into the Plessey site now occupying this area. The incline of the trackbed from Bournemouth up to No. 2 Junction can readily be seen with the spur on the left leading to the main station at Templecombe Upper. Track removal was completed here by September 1967.

Above: 71H, rather than 82G, is how we prefer to remember Templecombe Shed which stands empty and devoid of track in the summer of 1967 thanks to the activities of an advance guard of the demolition crew who had cleared the lower yard of all trackwork, although the main line still survived to the right of the shed for a few more weeks. The bridge, under which the long disused spur used to run to the LSWR mainline, can be seen to the left of the goods shed.

Left: The rear doorway that led to the interior of the shed bears mute testimony to the enginemen that passed this way. Today the relatively new shed building, dating only from the 1950s, has been incorporated into the Plessey Group facility that occupies the site.

Never the most utilised station, Templecombe Lower Platform slumbers in the warm sunshine of the summer of 1967 sandwiched between Bridge 152 Coombe Throop Lane and Bridge 153 the ex LSWR mainline. In latter years only passengers from the 10 pm train from Bournemouth could alight here thereby saving the tedious necessity of running to the upper station with the last train of the day. The platform was also occasionally used for crew changes.

Templecombe No. 2 Junction controlling access to the spur to the high level station and the main line to Bournemouth dipping down to pass under the ex LSWR mainline in the distance as seen in July 1967. Apart from the odd broken pane of glass the box is much as it must have appeared on its last day in service and I recall that there were working timetables and other ephemera scattered over its floor. The box was demolished some 4 months later.

No more racegoers would throng the staggered platforms at Wincanton. Although looking fairly presentable in this July 1967 view with signal arm and Southern style lampshades still undamaged, the growth of vegetation on the permanent way indicates that time has all but run out for this location which today is covered by housing development.

Wincanton down platform sees an alternative use as a car maintenance facility in this view taken shortly before demolition and redevelopment for housing. The signalbox remains on the up platform albeit in a somewhat skeletal state. The concrete lamposts were rescued for further use at the Swanage Railway.

View looking north to Cole station through Pitcombe Road Bridge No.121 a couple of years after track removal. The station building has not yet been converted into a house nor has the housing estate been built on the site of the yard and main formation. Today this bridge is partially infilled.

Delightful Cole – meeting place of the Somerset Central and the Dorset Central in 1862. Always a picturesque spot it still retains a special atmosphere even 18 months after the last passenger train has gone. A mere 4 months after this view was taken the demolition gangs had done their work and the scene was transformed forever. Together with Chilcompton and Moorewood, the signalbox here had been closed in 1965 prior to the end of services, the box and up platform shelter being demolished at Cole in June 1966.

A view from the footbridge looking south at Evercreech Junction in January 1968 towards a rake of empty wagons ready for use by the demolition contractors who were close at hand some 2 miles down the line at this time. The solidly built water tower is a reminder of the workmanship that went into railway infrastructure in those days.

The tall down starter signal is off but there will be no more trains to benefit from its benevolent indication. The fine water column with its attendant brazier is still in place as indeed are most of the elements of what might be a functioning railway were it not for the tell tale growth of vegetation between the rusty tracks. This picture was taken on the last day of SR steam 9th July 1967.

The perfect country junction station of Evercreech on a glorious July afternoon in 1967. The centre road, formerly used by Mendip bankers, now plays host to a Wickham PW gangers' trolley B29W from Radstock. This had been at the junction since February and would remain even after all the track had been lifted, finally being removed by lorry during the summer of 1968.

The drowsy calm of a midsummer's day is captured in this picture taken from the classic Evercreech Junction location of the Up Yard. The PW trolley can be seen on the centre road and the track layout is shown to advantage in the absence of any other railway vehicles.

Signaltop bird's eye view of the physical junction at Evercreech with the remains of the burnt out North signalbox. The curvature of the Bath extension away to the left is readily apparent contrasting sharply with the straight run in from the Burnham line in the foreground.

Above: Demolition is well advanced in this February 1968 view of the up platform. Only the rear wall and chimney breast of the waiting room remain, the signalbox and footbridge having already gone. Crossing gates still span the road which has yet to be resurfaced following removal of the track from the tarmac. *Below:* With tracks removed, road resurfaced, footbridge and signalbox demolished the station is looking very forlorn. Note the crossing gates stacked against the down platform.

Above: The grass and weeds grow high in the ballast at Evercreech New. Although the cabinet on the right is devoid of S&T equipment a surprising survivor is the Trespass Notice but its dire warnings of financial penalties have a hollow ring and seem irrelevant now. The signalbox here had been closed in October 1964 and was demolished soon after.
Left: A scene of devastation at Shepton Mallet where track was recovered in early April 1968. The water tank lies in two halves on the ground behind the footbridge which with the signalbox and signalling department buildings was to be demolished shortly afterwards. The remaining buildings were removed over the next 4 years with only the platforms remaining by 1973. These too have since gone and the site swallowed up in the inevitable industrial estate. Charlton Road Viaduct seen in the distance survives to this day in a well cared for state.

Above: From the guards van of a northbound track recovery train in November 1967 the twin bores of Winsor Hill tunnel can clearly be seen. The left hand was the original at 239 yards, the new tunnel on the right being considerable shorter at 126 yards. The remains of a PW hut can be seen between the running lines.

Right: Masbury Halt, where the nearby summit of the line was 811 feet up on Mendip, is seen in early 1968 when both tracks were still extant, albeit only the former down line was being used by Hymek hauled recovery trains from Evercreech Junction.

Left: After track removal in May 1968 little demolition was undertaken as the station was in private occupation, only the down platform shelter and signalbox were removed. The original station building has been extended by the present occupant and the space where the tracks once were has been grassed over.

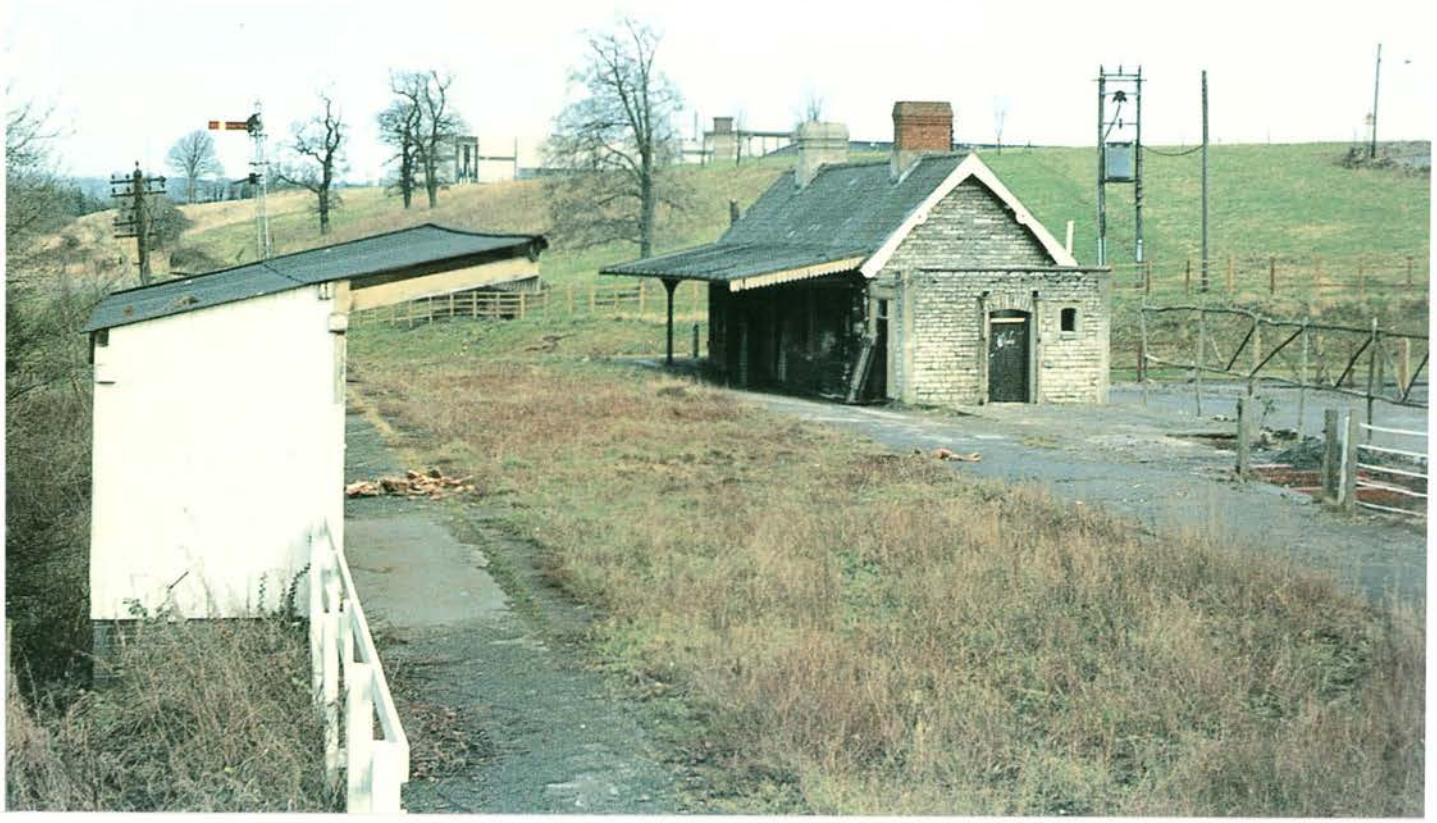
Left: Emborough Quarry at Moorewood had its own sidings which were served by rail until June 1965. In the course of time three large stone crushing plants were built here to develop the site of an earlier brick and tile works, fuller's earth and ochre also being obtained. A positively lethal looking industrial building in danger of imminent collapse together with the remains of an equally venerable rusted lorry cab litter the site in 1968.

Below: Strangely track still remains behind the gate giving access to the stone crushing plant but not on the mainline. Track on the mainline was removed by June 1968 but that from the sidings not until early 1969 enabling this shot to be dated to the summer of '68.

Binegar, a lonely spot on Mendip serving few houses, awaits its fate in early 1968. Signalling was still intact as can be seen from the tall home signal beyond the station on the 1 in 50 grind to Masbury summit. Hard to believe that this is the same busy place that featured as "Boiland" in a BTF instructional film on Single Line Working made in the 1950s.

Left: The entrance to Chilcompton tunnel with the sleeper marks in the ballast showing that the right hand side has been the most recently lifted of the two lines. Track removal here took place in June 1968. Today the north portals have been infilled and the land returned to pasture, the tunnel being used, with access through the south portals, by a local farmer and a rifle club.

Below: Midsomer Norton seen with track infilled between the platforms during its tenure by Somervale Secondary School. The infilling was subsequently removed and the S&D Trackbed Trust are actively recreating the flavour of the old line having relaid track and spruced up the site in recent years.



Midsomer Norton South is still substantially complete, even down to the framework of its legendary greenhouse where the blooms which used to adorn the station were once raised. Track removal did not reach here until July 1968 where it abruptly ceased due to the closure of the North Somerset line by floods and the inability of BR to provide wagons for the contractor. Recovery of the final section from here to Radstock was undertaken by BR using road vehicles on an "as and when basis" during 1969.

The gradient post beneath the station nameboard in this Spring 1968 view gives a graphic illustration of the change in grade to 1 in 5
Up. The start of the assault on Mendip began at the platform end of Radstock North for southbound trains.

Following recovery of the last remaining track in the Radstock area, by demolition contractors during the period August-December 1976, Radstock North awaited its fate. The buildings were finally swept away in 1979/80 when the local authority redeveloped the whole site from Radstock North station to Tyning. Before this happened this view was taken as a photographic memento of the last remaining section of the S&D to see traffic.

Three views featuring Radstock Shed, a sub shed of Bath Green Park.
Above: View showing the 3-way point which was removed by members of the S&D Trust in June 1976 for re-use at Washford.
Above right: Steam hangs wraith-like in requiem over the shed area having been produced by the Bagnall loco of the S&D Trust operating brake van rides to Writhlington Colliery in December 1971. The shed houses a BR Class 08 shunter with an unidentified Trust locomotive being worked on outside.

Left: Radstock shed following completion of track removal at the end of 1976. The building lasted a little longer only to be demolished as part of the local authority redevelopment of the whole area during 1979/80.

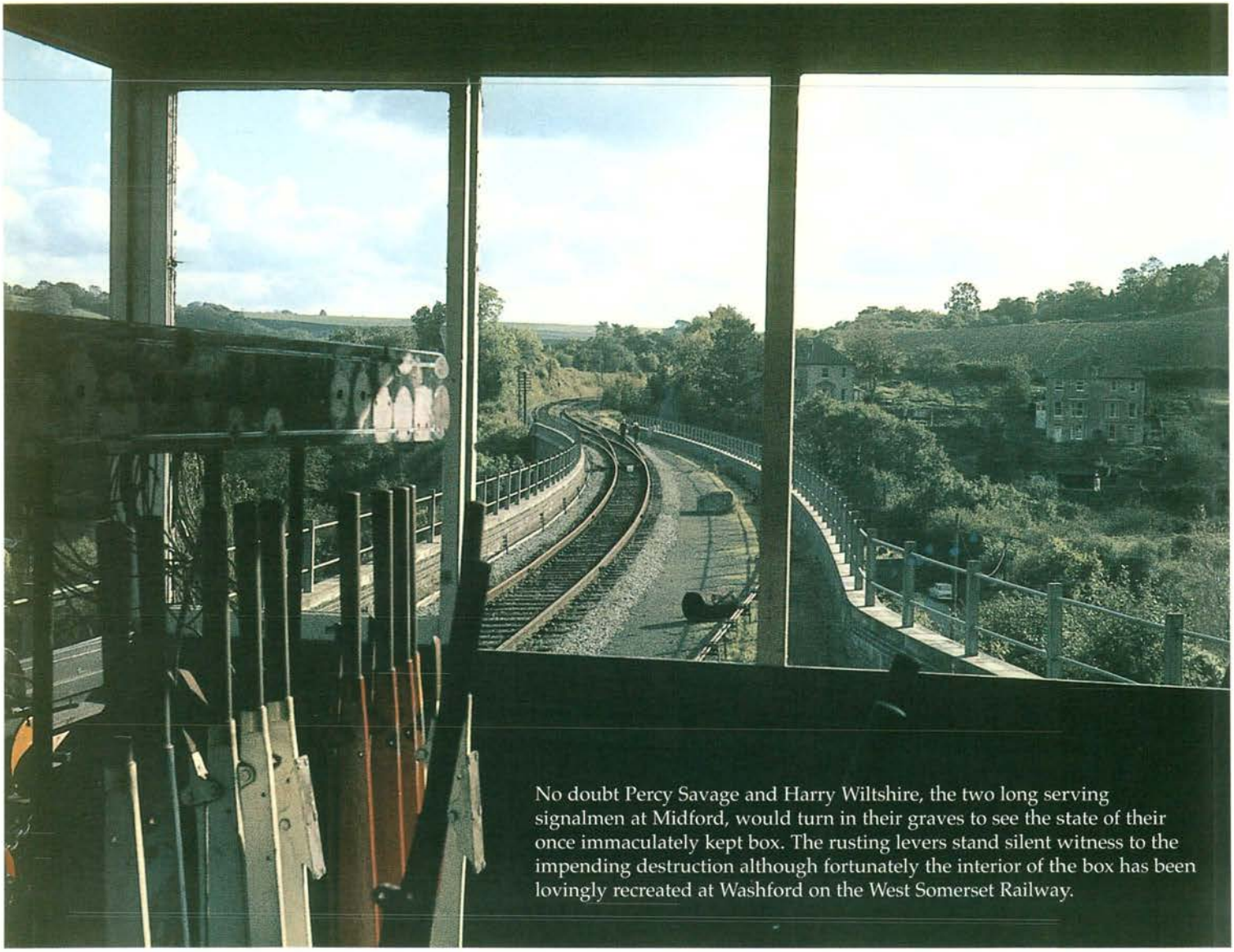
Above: Under stormy skies a Hymek shunts a rake of coal wagons adjacent to the shed. In the left foreground is the site of Radstock East signalbox, latterly North 'A' box. The photographer is standing by the former Tyning bridge, the abutments of which can be seen on the right of the wagon on the former up line.

Right: Shoscombe & Single Hill Halt retains its concrete platforms and signboards in this autumn 1967 view. A separate demolition contract was awarded for the section from Writhlington to Bath Junction which started in July of that year and was not to finish until May 1968. The isolated position of Shoscombe down steeply graded narrow roads necessitated the use of minibuses as replacements once trains had been withdrawn.

Mellow Wellow ! The evening sun imparts a golden glow to the stonework of the empty station building photographed in November 1967. The signalbox is the distance is now the only S&D box to survive in its correct location and was last offered for sale at £30,000 having been converted to a dwelling. It is rumoured that artist Peter Blake, who designed the album cover for Sgt. Pepper, and converted the house, infilling the space between the platforms to make a sunken garden, entertained The Beatles here on more than one occasion.

A visit to Midford on 22nd October 1967 was to prove very timely for track removal gangs were to reach the station by the first week in December. Were it not for the film of rust evident on the rails in this signal top view there is little to indicate that this is not a working railway. However, soon it would go the way of the Camerton branch whose remains can be seen passing under the viaduct in the foreground.

The gaunt shell of Midford box still stands in October 1967 whilst the station building has already suffered at the hands of the demolition gangs whose bottles of propane gas can be seen at the platform end. The tablet catching apparatus leans drunkenly against the wall of the box.



No doubt Percy Savage and Harry Wiltshire, the two long serving signalmen at Midford, would turn in their graves to see the state of their once immaculately kept box. The rusting levers stand silent witness to the impending destruction although fortunately the interior of the box has been lovingly recreated at Washford on the West Somerset Railway.

It is late October 1967 and the autumn tints are beginning to show in the trackside foliage as the line enters the southern portal of the mile long Combe Down tunnel. Track recovery was to reach here by the turn of the year.

Above: Lyncombe Vale was a pleasant spot between Devonshire and Combe Down tunnels no doubt giving a welcome if brief respite and fresh air to locomotive crews. Track has only just been removed in this spring 1968 view, the sleepers and chairs awaiting removal. *Below:* The line leading up Devonshire bank and into Devonshire tunnel is seen from bridge No 9 Maple Grove which can be seen in the lower picture. This bridge still stands today. Devonshire Tunnel was one fifth of a mile long not as bad as Combe Down but still unpleasant nonetheless for locomotive crews working their engines hard up the 1 in 50 climb.

Looking north from the entrance to Devonshire tunnel in late 1967 the long straight stretch down the 1 in 50 grade to Bath Junction can be seen. This has now been converted into a linear park and the deep cutting in the foreground has been infilled along with much back filling to seal the tunnel mouth.

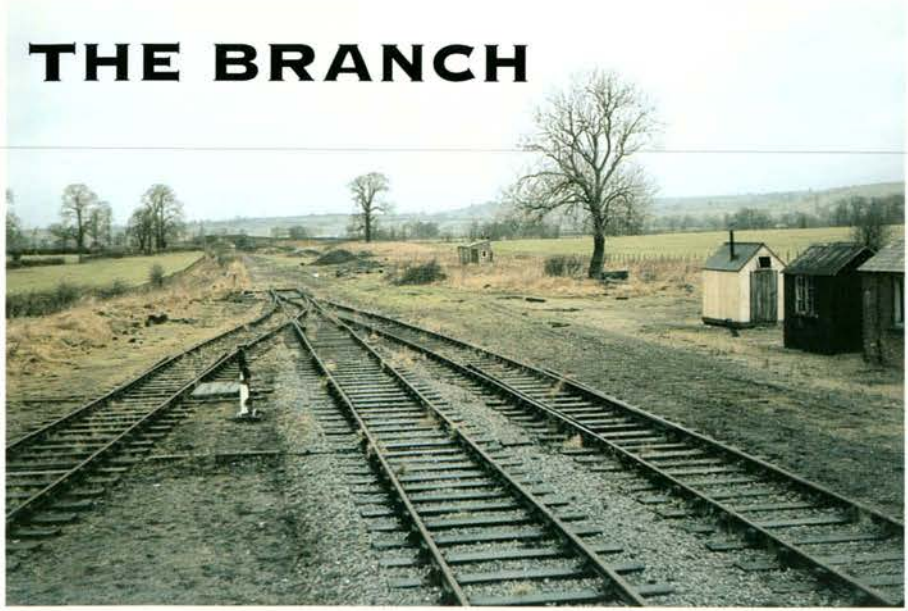
Begrimed exterior of Bath Green Park with a further selection of 1960's vehicles on display including a Triumph Herald, Morris Minor, Ford Popular and Mark 1 Cortina. After closure the station lay derelict for 16 years before being magnificently restored by Sainsburys in 1982.

The overall roof of Bath Green Park, although devoid of glass and badly in need of a coat of paint, still lends the derelict station an air of importance in this autumn 1967 view. In December of that year the City Council made use of the site as a temporary car park before tarmac was laid in 1968 to make the provision more permanent. The signboard remains on the left although only the outline of the typical Midland sign remains.

Buffer stop view of the former S&D northern terminus. As early as October 1966 tracks were removed from the station but only as far as the shed entrance for the goods yard was to remain in use until 1972. The bonded warehouse on the right hand platform retains its British Railways signboard and both bridges over the River Avon are in situ – one was to be removed shortly afterwards.

The famous grounded coach body used for enginemens' "Mutual Improvement Classes" resists the tide of destruction engulfing the old Midland shed at Bath. The turntable was cut up as early as October 1966. The shattered remains of the S & D wooden engine shed lie mangled and twisted on the left. Running lines still remain on the right as goods traffic continued to be handled in Midland Bridge Yard until June 1971 after which large numbers of condemned box vans were held here for the next 12 months or so – the final working out of Bath being in April 1972.

THE BRANCH



Left: Track lifting on the branch began at Evercreech Junction North in February 1967 being undertaken initially by Cohens but from Glastonbury westwards by Wards until Bason Bridge was reached in October. This January 1968 view looking westwards shows that track had been lifted right up to the 3-way point denying any opportunity for using it if required. The small cabin in the right middle distance was for a long time all that remained in the middle of fields to show that this was once a railway junction, but even this has now disappeared.

Below: The first station down the branch was Pylle and it is seen here dwarfed by its large goods shed and road overbridge in 1968. In 1970 the road bridge was demolished. By the early 1990s the station building had been extended and converted into a dwelling and the goods shed had been transformed into a 5 bedroom house.

Right: Situated between Pylle and West Pennard stations on the four mile Pylle bank was lonely Cock Mill crossing. Although one of the gates was subsequently removed for firewood by Glastonbury festivalgoers from the nearby Pilton site, this was subsequently replaced courtesy of the festival organisers. The crossing keepers house has attracted no new tenants and still lies derelict today.

Below: " West Pennard station built of the local limestone" was how John Betjeman introduced this delightful spot in his tv film of the S&D "Let's imagine a branch line railway." The nameboard still proclaims its location but pram wheels now lie where formerly those of Ivatt tanks and Collett 0-6-0s turned towards the end of the branch's life.

Left: The gates of the aptly named Cemetary (sic) Lane crossing in Glastonbury still hang from their posts but the ballast stretching away across the levels reveals that the track, originally consisting of two single lines to Evercreech Junction and the branch to Wells, has already been lifted. Ultimately this location would be swallowed up by the town's relief road.

Below: The wooden structure of Glastonbury & Street station did duty as a wood storage area for a timber merchant for a number of years after closure and it is this role that this view illustrates. Although the station was demolished in 1984 the canopy seen on the right was removed and re-erected in a Glastonbury car park adjacent to the market.

The only intermediate station on the Glastonbury – Wells branch was at Polsham seen here in the late 1960s. The level crossing gate posts are still apparent as is the green and cream SR paintwork. The station, sold off after closure as a private house still performs this function today

Above: The trackbed curving in from the foreground to join the former GWR Yatton – Witham line at Wells once carried the S&D branch from Glastonbury. Closed in 1951 it was to be followed 12 years later by the GWR service which left Wells isolated from the rail network. The platform, all that remained of Priory Road station, can be seen on the right with the S&D goods shed centre picture. This was not demolished until 1988 when many of the materials were reused at Cranmore (ESR).

Left: With Glastonbury Tor in the distance wrought iron girder bridge No. 268 known as the River Brue Aqueduct Bridge still stands today as a reminder that once a main line from the Bristol to the English Channels passed this way.

The gates at Ashcott & Meare are wide open to allow vehicular access to the trackbed at this point. A remarkable survivor on the left is the detached Ladies loo – and very draughtly it looks ! The inset shows a close-up of the decorative signboard, so much a feature at many of the stations.

Above: A wintry prospect of Highbridge taken from the footbridge before its present amputation and showing the single line worked as a long siding which enabled milk traffic from Bason Bridge to be handled until 1972.

Left The famous flat crossing which the S&D made with the GWR Bristol – Exeter mainline at Highbridge station seen in December 1967. Retention of this crossing, still controlled by the West signalbox seen on the left, was necessary to allow milk trains access to the remains of the branch. The crossing lasted until 1971 when a completely new junction from the down WR mainline was laid in for use in connection with the terminal constructed to handle flyash used in the construction of the M5 motorway.

Seen from one of the S&D platforms a maroon liveried Warship flashes across the flat crossing at Highbridge with a West of England train. Trains from Bason Bridge creamery are advised by the notice board on the right to proceed at a somewhat slower pace – 5 mph – over the crossing. Highbridge Crossing box which did not close until March 1972 is still in place as is the complete footbridge which in later years was truncated to serve merely the WR platforms to the left of the picture.

The majority of the S&D station installation at Highbridge was demolished in 1970 as part of the flyash contract with the exception of the concrete platform No. 5 still with a signal in place alongside the line from Bason Bridge. Tracklifting from the creamery commenced in December 1972 and the station site is now part of a housing estate

Above: Highbridge Locomotive Works closed as long ago as 1930 and apart from use during WW2, lay derelict for many years. In 1970 part of the works was demolished in connection with the flyash contract and by 1980 the rest had gone

Right: The interior of the former erecting shop seen shortly before demolition. The high level windows to improve the natural lighting are evident in this view.

Left: A side view of the exterior of the erecting shop at Highbridge Works. Only one locomotive was ever constructed here with two others being assembled from parts – the main task was heavy repairs.

"Come to Sunny Burnham" would not be appropriate for this December 1967 view of the former terminus. Closed to regular passenger traffic in 1951 with complete closure following in 1963, the excursion platform can still be seen on the left with the main platform on the right now devoid of its overall roof. The level crossing gates leading to the pier are still in place as is the goods shed.

PERCHANCE IT IS NOT DEAD.....

Left and above: Bath Green Park played host once again to an S&
7F when No. 53809 paid a return visit on 5/6th March 2006, the
40th anniversary of the closure of the line.
Below: Shillingstone station is being restored under the auspices of the North Dorset Railway Trust who have made impressive progress during the last twelve months. The profile of the preservation scheme has been considerably enhanced with the arrival of 9F No. 92207 *Morning Star* on site at the end of 2005.

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